

Media Release

Yavapai County Sheriff's Office

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Recent Rescues Overview – Parties became lost/stranded following GPS mapped Directions

On March 7, 2016, around 11:20 PM, the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office was notified that a family of 4, a male and female adult along with their 4 and 1½ year old children, were lost and stranded near Alamo Lake. The family's sedan was stuck in a ditch and they were concerned that an overnight stay would place the family in danger. Neighboring La Paz County officials, who were originally notified of the situation, assisted by requesting a DPS Ranger Helicopter to search for the family. In the meantime, a YCSO Forest Patrol deputy had members of the Southern Yavapai Search and Rescue Team (SYCSRT) respond to assist with a ground search. During limited phone contact, the family was instructed not to move and remain together.

Around 1:45 AM on March 8th, the DPS Ranger crew was able to find the family. DPS officers landed to check on their welfare and provide accurate GPS coordinates to ground searchers now in the vicinity. Just before 3 AM, the SYCSRT ground crew contacted the family and provided transportation out of the nighttime wilderness to the Alamo Camp Ground where they met up with other family members. The vehicle was scheduled for towing after daybreak.

The adults involved told deputies they were using a GPS mapping unit to guide them to a camp ground near the lake. Instead, the mapping led them in the wrong direction and eventually to a point where their vehicle became stranded in a wash.

On February 27, 2016, around 6PM, a Mesa resident called YCSO for help to find his 68-year-old wife as she was apparently lost near the east end of Bloody Basin Road, near Sheeps Bridge. His wife, who has memory loss issues, left their Mesa house earlier to go to a specific store. As she drove, he checked her location periodically using a phone application to track the OnStar service in the Cadillac Escalade. After about 4 hours, GPS directions indicated she was on a country road heading towards pavement but she



actually was driving further from civilization. Fortunately, just before the signal was lost, her husband tracked and recorded the location which placed the vehicle near the Verde River south of Sheeps Bridge.

A YCSO Forest Patrol deputy requested an air search and a DPS Ranger helicopter crew with night vision capabilities arrived shortly. Additionally, YCSRT Backcountry and 4x4 Units were called out to handle the ground search. Just before 8:30 PM, the DPS Ranger Crew found the vehicle, but it was unoccupied. The Back Country team quickly arrived and tracked shoe prints away from the vehicle which led to the woman who was waiting several hundred yards away. She was disoriented but otherwise physically ok except for scratches and bruises sustained while wandering away from the car.

DPS Ranger was called back to the scene and transported her to a Phoenix area hospital for treatment.

Again, YCSO wants to thank all our volunteers who continue to provide search and rescue capabilities, sometimes at great personal risk, 24 hours day, 7 days a week, for those needing assistance.

LESSON - *YCSO and our Search Rescue Crews have had other missions in the past involving those who became lost after relying solely on their GPS mapping devices.*

Remember, GPS units are only as accurate as the map data supplied. In many cases, rural areas can be most problematic and otherwise unmarked roads can be misinterpreted. Keep your GPS unit updated with the latest mapping software, consider bringing printed directions and/or a map as a backup and if you sense you are lost, STOP and verify location/ direction of travel or call someone for assistance.

- *How GPS works and issues with mapping are discussed in great detail at: <http://www.gps.gov/>. GPS users can even submit mapping errors which are then reported to the appropriate vendor for review.*

This site is a product of the National Coordination Office for Space-Based Positioning, Navigation and Timing – a host agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Citizens can contact the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office with information or questions at 928-771-3260 or the YCSO website: www.ycsoaz.gov